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PSYCHICAL RESEARCH AND PERSONALITY

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I CANNOT tell you how deeply grateful I am for the privilege of being here, and of this more intimate association with the work of the Society for Psychical Research, which has always meant so much to me. I should like to use the opportunity which this occasion offers me to share with you some thoughts about the relation between the study of personality and the inquiries with which we in psychical research are concerned, in the hope that each may illuminate the other.

The term "personality" is used in two senses. In Mr Tyrrell's stimulating volume, *The Personality of Man*,¹ our chief concern is with personality considered generically; that is, with those attributes which belong to personality as such, and not simply to certain individual persons here and there. On the other hand, the term personality is also used to mean individuality: to denote not the property of being a person as such, but the distinctive properties by which one person is differentiated from another. In the feeling that both uses of the term are warranted, we shall try to relate psychical research to personality in general, and also to individuality, as expressed in specific paranormal gifts which belong to some individuals and not to others.

I

We must still begin, I believe, with Frederic Myers's² conception that every personality is an integration of which only a limited portion appears at the conscious level. Personality is a system of energies which may throw up to its surface certain visible forms—specific cravings, or images or thoughts—but which is not in essence contained by the boundaries of explicit consciousness.

It is doubtful, of course, whether Myers's original conception of a rather sharp line of demarcation between supraliminal and subliminal can today be maintained. It has appeared more and more that personality is a matter of shadings or gradations, not only with respect to consciousness or degree of organization, but with respect to almost every aspect of its being. From

¹ Pelican Books, 1947.

² *Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death*, 1903.

this point of view we should have to say that supraliminal and subliminal processes appear to be essentially alike in most respects. There is, nevertheless, one basic sense in which Myers's conception has been vindicated by recent research, namely through the evidence that the conscious portion of our make-up may forcibly inhibit the operation of subliminal activities, including the operation of those paranormal powers with which psychical research is concerned. Of course it is not necessarily true that the subliminal has powers which the conscious can never realize. Yet the fact remains that for most people living in a civilization like ours, conscious intelligence is pretty well saturated with fears or resistances relating to the paranormal in general or to the paranormal in specific forms, and that this resistance may operate to make the subliminal less effective in the realization of its paranormal powers than it can become when such conscious control is removed. It would appear that the facilitating effect which dreams, hypnosis, sensory and motor automatisms, as well as states of "trance, possession, and ecstasy", seem to have in liberating the paranormal, may lie largely in the freedom from inhibiting conscious factors. Though the lower degree of effectiveness of the supraliminal in paranormal processes may lie in its preoccupation with the immediate physical environment, rather than through any intrinsic incompatibility between consciousness as such and the paranormal as such, the modern view would be similar to that of Myers in regarding the subliminal of all human beings as endowed with paranormal powers with which one ordinarily has scant commerce at the conscious level.

But we need a sharper clarification of the way in which subliminal processes are set free. A convenient example is the Groningen experiment in telepathy.¹ A young student of dentistry, blindfolded, in a black cage in a lower room of the university psychology laboratory, received telepathic impressions from experimenters in a darkened room just above him, tapping out with his finger the specific points on a board which had been chosen by lot by the experimenters above. The feature of this experiment that I would stress is that the man had fallen into a semi-trance condition, a dissociated or abstracted state, and that this state of withdrawal from active preoccupation with the outer world seemed to afford the basis for his telepathic powers. It was, so to speak, the dissociability of this man's personality, the openness of his subliminal to impressions from the experimenters, that made him so good a subject.

One is tempted here to use a hypothesis which has passed already through many schematizations and which I will offer in a form suggested by Warcollier.² In this view we are concerned with subliminal operations not only on the part of the percipient, but also on the part of the agent. The hypothesis is that the agent's conscious desire to transmit impressions activates a subliminal operation within him which causes a subliminal response in the percipient, and is then able to relay the content of the message to the conscious level of the percipient's mind. In point of fact, Mrs Sidgwick's suggestion in 1923 about the reciprocity, the two-way

¹ "Some Experiments in Telepathy Performed in the Psychological Institute of the University of Groningen," *Compte-Rendu du Premier Congrès International des Recherches Psychiques*, 1922, pp. 396-408.

² *Experimental Telepathy*, 1938.

action involved in telepathy, is compatible with this view; she writes: "... I think the kind of union of minds, the thinking and feeling together, here shown may be regarded as the type or norm of telepathic communication to which all other cases conform in varying degrees."¹

We would then have the hypothesis that all human personalities are capable of paranormal processes in so far as there is freedom from conscious preoccupation with the immediate sensory world, and in so far as there is some sort of reciprocity between the deep-level operation of two individuals.

II

Now let us face the question: is it true that *all* human beings have paranormal powers? When we speak of hunting for a "good subject", the suggestion is offered that paranormal power is a special gift, like absolute pitch. Is this the case, or is it in some degree the gift of all human beings? I confess that over the years I have wavered back and forth between these alternatives: and have been very unsure how to answer the practical research question: Is it worth while to set up experiments for Tom, Dick, and Harry, or should we confine our experiments to the gifted Tom, and leave Dick and Harry out? But it seems to me that after these years of uncertainty the evidence has finally driven us directly into the view that we are concerned with generic, and not simply with individual gifts. Much depends upon the subtlety of the method, and the devices that we use for reinforcing and bringing to maximal expression whatever primitive and half-choked functions may be waiting for our detection and cultivation. But many mass experiments have given positive results. In the Pratt-Woodruff² experiment of 1939, a large number of subjects took part in a well-controlled experiment involving "screened touch matching", with no part of the observation dependent upon what any one experimenter did or reported. Each subject had to match cards against targets placed on the other side of the screen from himself. Material was locked away after each session in boxes to which only the experimenters had keys, and the data were doubly checked. In this investigation, as in others before and since, the effect is clearly a collective effect, and not dependent upon the performance of a few individuals.

It may, of course, be urged that a number of other mass experiments have given negative results, but this I think misconceives the statistical issue. The critical ratio of 5 which was obtained by Pratt and Woodruff should not be expected to occur even a single time among all the large-scale ESP experiments ever performed. It is possible either to get or not to get a particular group phenomenon depending on the method used. For example, in public health research one may find evidence of vitamin D deficiency in a given North American urban group, or not find it, depending upon the adequacy of one's technique: but if a competent investigation finds the deficiency appearing generically in a New York

¹ "Phantasms of the Living. An Examination and Analysis of Cases of Telepathy between Living Persons Printed in the 'Journal' of the Society for Psychical Research since the Publication of the Book 'Phantasms of the Living', by Gurney, Myers, and Podmore, in 1886," *Proc. S.P.R.*, Vol. 33, 1922-3, pp. 23-429 (quotation is from p. 419).

² "Size of Stimulus Symbols in Extra-Sensory Perception," *Journal of Parapsychology*, Vol. 3, 1939, pp. 121-58.

population, it is not a sufficient answer to show that others working with other essentially similar populations *but* with a different method, have not found it. It may be true that something happened in a group of human beings at Duke University which could not happen in other groups of human beings elsewhere, but it seems more natural to believe that there was something important about the *method*. The Pratt-Woodruff experiment does not stand alone. Whately Carington¹ repeatedly found mass effects. In the studies conducted at Stanford by Charles Stuart² and analyzed by Betty Humphrey,³ mass effects were found, and there are many other examples. But I should be willing if necessary to rest my case for mass effects on the Pratt-Woodruff investigation.

III

We turn to the individualized aspects of such data, that is, to the problem of individual predispositions to the paranormal which may differentiate one personality from another. In Charles Stuart's⁴ method of testing for clairvoyance a picture was placed in a large opaque envelope; to the outside of the envelope was clipped a drawing sheet upon which the experimental subject drew his guess as to the picture within. The positive results came *en masse* from subjects who were shown on the basis of the Elksch drawing test⁵ to be people prone to make expansive drawings. And people who were prone to compressive drawings tended to miss the targets to a significant degree. Humphrey⁶ has suggested that those who are expansive in the drawing test are people who reach boldly and vigorously for a challenging hidden target; they are capable of overcoming the obstacles and asserting themselves successfully in this task. The compressives not only fail, but overshoot the mark in their failure. Six different cycles of clairvoyance tests yielded these same trends. We have, then, a meaningful relation between personality attributes and paranormal performance.

The Schmeidler⁷ experiments appear to warrant the same general conclusions. Her investigations at Harvard between 1942 and 1945 and

¹ "Experiments on the Paranormal Cognition of Drawings, IV." *Proc. S.P.R.*, Vol. 47, 1944, pp. 155-228.

² "A Classroom ESP Experiment with the Free Response Method," *Journal of Parapsychology*, Vol. 9, 1945, pp. 92-105; "An ESP Experiment with Enclosed Drawings," *ibid.*, Vol. 9, 1945, pp. 278-95; "GESP Experiments with the Free Response Method," *ibid.*, Vol. 10, 1946, pp. 21-35, and "A Second Classroom ESP Experiment with the Free Response Method," *ibid.*, Vol. 11, 1947, pp. 14-25.

³ "Success in ESP as Related to Form of Response Drawings: I. Clairvoyance Experiments," *Journal of Parapsychology*, Vol. 10, 1946, pp. 78-106, and "Success in ESP as Related to Form of Response Drawings: II. GESP Experiments," *ibid.*, Vol. 10, 1946, pp. 181-96.

⁴ See footnote 2, above.

⁵ "Children's Drawings in a Projective Technique," *Psychol. Monogr.*, Vol. 58, 1945, pp. 1-31.

⁶ See footnote 3, above. Refer also to "Some Personality Characteristics Related to ESP Performance," *Journal of Parapsychology*, Vol. 10, 1946, pp. 269-89, and "The Relation of ESP to Mode of Drawing," *ibid.*, Vol. 13, 1949, pp. 31-47.

⁷ "Predicting Good and Bad Scores in a Clairvoyance Experiment: A Preliminary Report," *Journal, A.S.P.R.*, Vol. 37, pp. 103-10, and "Predicting Good and Bad Scores in a Clairvoyance Experiment: A Final Report," *ibid.*, Vol. 37, 1943, pp. 210-21.

continued in New York indicate that subjects calling ESP cards, prepared by random numbers and placed in concealment, can make paranormal contacts with the material in a manner related to their attitude to the task. Those subjects who believed it possible to succeed in such a task, gave a significant positive deviation, while subjects who excluded this possibility yielded a significantly below-chance score. The former group, the "sheep", in some sense know where the stars, circles, and so on actually are; but the second group, the "goats", must also know where they are, because they cannot consistently miss them *unless* they know where they are. This latter process, sometimes called "negative perception", has been well demonstrated by Bruner and Postman¹ in the ordinary, normal process of sense-perception. Such studies suggest that a complex subliminal process of feeling one's way toward the target is going on, and that other subliminal processes operate to prevent the contact with the target from appearing at the conscious level. The distribution of scores makes it clear that this is a mass effect, not an effect due to a few individuals.

So far, the Humphrey and Schmeidler approaches are identical; in so far as attitude reflects personality, personality counts in paranormal performance. Yet this did not seem to Schmeidler to be a sufficient clarification of the problem. It was certainly not true that all believers could be counted upon to score above chance nor was it possible from the data, as so far described, to make clear how individual personalities are operating. As an experienced clinical worker with the Rorschach ink-blot method, Schmeidler determined to do systematic Rorschach analyses of those taking part in her current group experiments. Administering the Rorschach test in group form, and scoring it by Ruth Munroe's method² to indicate good or poor social adjustment, she was able to show that well-adjusted sheep can be differentiated in their paranormal performances; likewise, well-adjusted and poorly-adjusted goats. The data thus yield four groups, which score in the following manner: 1. Well-adjusted sheep score significantly high. 2. Poorly-adjusted sheep score about at the chance level. 3. Poorly-adjusted goats likewise score at about the chance level. 4. Well-adjusted goats score significantly below chance. It is, she remarks, just as if each of the well-adjusted groups succeeded in doing what it wanted to do—the sheep to score above, the goats to score below chance.³ The two poorly-adjusted groups, however, manage only to stumble and fall, being bogged down apparently by their own intrapsychic conflicts, so that the sheep cannot score high, and the goats cannot score low.⁴

This result was altogether "too good"; and naturally she felt that the

¹ Bruner, J. S., and Postman, L. "Emotional Selectivity in Perception and Reaction," *J. Personality*, 1947, Vol. 16, pp. 69-77.

² "The Inspection Technique: A method of rapid evaluation of the Rorschach protocol," *Rorschach Research Exchange*, Vol. 8, 1944, pp. 46-70, and "Prediction of the Adjustment and Academic Performance of College Students by a Modification of the Rorschach Method," *Applied Psychology Monographs*, No. 7, Sept. 1945, pp. 104 ff.

³ The goats, of course, if well-informed and rational, would aim at the chance level, not *below* it. In trying to avoid positive scores, they overdo it and miss too many targets.

⁴ "Rorschach Variables in Relation to ESP Scores," *Journal A.S.P.R.*, Vol. 41, 1947, pp. 35-64.

experiment should be repeated. Two large-scale repetitions have been made by Schmeidler herself, with results in the same general direction; and now Mrs Adeline Roberts, another Rorschach worker, has independently obtained corroborative results with a fresh set of Rorschach data. This, of course, is not the same as to say that similar results can be obtained by everyone with every group. It is enough, however, to indicate that the data are not entirely dependent on the Schmeidler procedure alone.

We might summarize the results so far by saying that individual needs, or purposes, bear a direct relation to paranormal cognition; and at the same time evidence that individual subliminal activities operate to set free or to inhibit such processes. Perhaps we should say, as Hugh Woodworth¹ did, that there is continuous "blocking and unblocking"; a process by which the extension of ourselves in the direction of the target is throttled and constrained, and likewise a process by which the constraint is sometimes removed.

From this standpoint there arises the question: Assuming that we are all motivated to reach a given target, are some of us more free than are others to unblock, *i.e.* to remove these local blockages which seem to blunt our paranormal capacities? For example, are some of us more free from censorship, more ready to make contact with anything and everything which is out there waiting to make its mark upon us? And are some of us by inheritance or by training more loosely put together, more easily induced to fall into states of dissociation than others? The more easily dissociated individuals might be freer of blockages, simply dropping off the offending baggage. This carries us back to emphasis upon devices which make it possible for sensory processes, as in crystal vision, to externalize images which have been subliminally received, or to carry into overt motor expression, such as automatic writing, the words or other symbols which have failed of an outlet. Assuming that there exists in the subliminal a paranormally perceived reality, we may say that an automatism is effective in accordance with its degree of removal from contact with the conscious system of ideas. There are large individual differences in capacity for such automatisms. There is, of course, no special virtue in automatisms as such, and many of them are devoid of all discernible traces of the paranormal; yet if once we have evidence that the paranormal is struggling to express itself, we may perhaps help it on its way through the cultivation of automatisms.

Sensory automatisms are rather easy to cultivate. And if the present approach is sound, it is possible that normal everyday perception is in some degree—now more, now less—affected by paranormal processes operating through sensory automatisms, and that we might learn to detect their effect. Thus a number of spontaneous cases of telepathy suggest that the vehicle of their expression is the restructuring of present external stimuli. Rorschach plates and other indistinct material as used in the "projective tests" of personality, by permitting large individual differences in the form of perceptual organization, allow personality trends to influence cognitive structuring. Just so, perhaps certain spontaneous cases function essentially as projective tests. In a recent case the end

¹ "Further Consideration of Multiple-Blocking and Unblocking in Normal Subjects," *Journal A.S.P.R.*, Vol. 37, 1943, pp. 117-33.

result of a death compact between two men took the form of the survivor's noting, in a restaurant, a face which startlingly resembled that of his friend. His friend, with whom he had long been out of touch, had in fact just died. The stranger's face encountered in the restaurant had for the moment been transformed ; had been built up to resemble, one might say, a death mask of the distant dying individual.¹

You will recall in *Phantasms of the Living*² and in other collections, a number of cases of this type. Our hypothesis would take the following form : Other things being equal, those who are prone to sensory automatisms are thereby prone to the distortion of their ordinary sense perceptions through contamination by paranormal impressions. Likewise, since automatic writing and other motor automatisms have in general the same releasing functions, those most prone to such motor automatisms would, other things being equal, be most likely to show an admixture of the paranormal with their other motor activities.

If this makes sense, it may be worth while, in the study of extra-sensory phenomena, to do some preliminary tests upon the proneness of each subject to automatisms, both sensory and motor. As a reason for believing that this is worth while, I would emphasize that in the cross-correspondence group, and in other sensitives studied by the S.P.R., there is abundant evidence that automatisms yield data which the conscious individual cannot achieve unaided. Take the "one horse dawn experiment",³ the effort to convey a Greek phrase to Mrs Verrall. Despite the fact that the thought was at various times in the experimenter's mind (both supraliminally and subliminally) and available as the target for a period of months, it was only through automatism that success was finally achieved. In the classical cross-correspondence, "Hope, Star and Browning",⁴ the successful transmission to automatists in Britain of a message formulated quite independently was accomplished through automatic writing in which reference to Browning's "Abt Vogler" expresses a theme given in Mrs Piper's trance.

But in setting up an experiment to test the relation of degree of dissociation to degree of success in paranormal processes, one notes the distinction made by Margaret Reeves⁵ between the conditions operating in spontaneous cases and in experimental cases. In developing the implications of Kurt Lewin's topological psychology, Reeves makes it clear that in spontaneous cases the type of dissociation which is operative is the temporary removal of an outer shell or hull consisting of the daily preoccupations of the conscious, waking individual. When this outer shell is removed, he withdraws from the world into sleep, or trance, or a state of abstraction. There may then be a profound release of the deeper capacities. In experimental cases, on the other hand, the experimenter must employ relatively superficial motivation such as curiosity, or the desire to gratify the experimenter, or win a prize ; consequently, dissociation will

¹ "Cases," *Journal A.S.P.R.*, Vol. 38, 1944, pp. 48-52.

² Trübner & Company, 1886.

³ *Proc. S.P.R.*, Vol. 20, 1906, pp. 156-67.

⁴ Piddington, J. G., "A Series of Concordant Automatisms," *Proc. S.P.R.*, Vol. 22, 1908, pp. 31-416, especially 59-77.

⁵ "A Topological Approach to Parapsychology," *Journal A.S.P.R.*, Vol. 38, 1944, pp. 72-82.

have a very much less marked effect because nothing much is happening in the deeper strata. But when the motives which are near the surface are themselves activated, as in a furious and successful effort towards high scores, nothing is to be gained by dissociation.

Indeed, if this is the case, some questions emerge regarding the logic of attempting to test by experimental methods those hypotheses which are most reasonable in relation to spontaneous phenomena. In the spontaneous cases, Nature often hurls at us profoundly moving dynamic forces which we can only occasionally control in the laboratory; and the attempt to find in the general population individuals who will behave as if they were successful recipients of spontaneous cases may be based upon a misconception of the problem. In this matter of testing for ESP, I am afraid that my colleagues and I have often resembled the bees described by Samuel Butler, which wandered into the house through the open windows on a summer day, attacked the flower designs on the wallpaper, and followed them slowly to the ceiling. Then they began at the foot of the wall nearby and worked their way hopefully to the ceiling again, and so on across the room; learning, it would appear, rather little by the experimental method of hypothesis testing. It seems likely that our attempts to obtain positive results in telepathy and clairvoyance with the mass of people is going to be successful only when we have fully analyzed the problem of motivation and of working atmosphere. I suspect that in many of the successful mass experiments some favourable psychological factor in the atmosphere was achieved, and that it is not worth while to perform such experiments unless one tries to learn more about such atmospheres. We know as yet very little about them. In Rhine's¹ and Tyrrell's² experiments the subject's enjoyment of the task seems to be an asset, and in Rhine's early work the likelihood of a positive result was made so real and compelling to the subjects that they felt they must "stand and deliver". But our present formulations are naive, and we have years of work to do before we can define the favourable states for a given individual in a given task.

For if and when it is finally established that all human beings by virtue of their needs and their capacity to free themselves from intrapsychic barriers are capable of paranormal processes, it will only be because we have in the meantime learned much more both about needs and about barriers. What we know today is hardly more than the clue to a clue. There is no direct evidence that the successful subjects reported by Soal and Goldney,³ Tyrrell, Rhine, Martin and Stribic,⁴ for example, differ essentially from other people either in their needs or in the barriers to the cognitive activities which express these needs.

If we ask, then, what more we must find out to do better research, we might first stress the great complexities through which needs and barriers evolve in childhood before they take the form revealed in adult personality.

¹ *Extra-Sensory Perception*, 1934.

² "Further Research in Extra-Sensory Perception," *Proc. S.P.R.*, Vol. 44, 1936-37, pp. 99-166.

³ "Experiments in Precognitive Telepathy," *Proc. S.P.R.*, Vol. 47, 1943, pp. 21-150.

⁴ "Studies in Extra-Sensory Perception: I. An Analysis of 25,000 Trials," *Journal of Parapsychology*, Vol. 2, 1938, pp. 23-30, and "Studies in Extra-Sensory Perception: II. An Analysis of a Second Series of 25,000 Trials," *ibid.*, Vol. 2, 1938, pp. 287-95.

One finds, for example, that childish needs undergo what Freud calls cathexis, or what McDougall calls a process of sentiment formation. It is not the needs in their raw infantile form but a complex and elaborate pattern of needs that constitutes the going concern of the adult individual. In order to work effectively with the question of his needs, we should have to know, so to speak, what the paranormal means to him; what he sees in the process, how he feels towards it, as it relates to the possibility of making contact with the world outside his immediate orbit of experience. We should have to know in what way he protests against the restrictions of time and space; the nature of his adventuresome challenge of an unknown world. We must also know the specific meanings, direct and symbolic, which are served by the particular content, the particular drawings or card-symbols towards which he reaches out. In the same way, we need to know very much more than we know about the nature of barriers and their removal. It may be that in one person the mind is like a city built on islands interconnected with strong and solid bridges. Dissociation would be like the breakdown of one or more of the bridges, and could be overcome only by arduous reconstruction. Another mind might have the easy dissociability of a system of drawbridges, with an easy-break, easy-make, every few minutes or hours. It is almost certain that most barriers are of a still more complex sort, to which psychoanalysis and other deep probing methods have pointed. The paths of association or interconnection are criss-crossing lines almost like the lines of communication in a military terrain: devious, complex, irregular, and subject to bombardment as well as natural erosion, so that it would take a combination geologist-map-maker-tactician to figure out the possible lines of communication and of rupture of communication which are most important in any given terrain at any given time.

This mode of thinking would suggest that great progress is to be expected from psychoanalytic studies. This does not mean that anyone must accept any theory which does not intellectually appeal to him; but it means that deep-level exploration of unconscious psychic structures, in all their infinitely complex dynamics, is a major tool for psychical research. In this belief, the group of medical men and women, mostly psychoanalysts, who have recently constituted themselves the Medical Section of the American Society for Psychical Research, have embarked upon studies which may throw light upon telepathic dreams and other paranormal processes which appear in their practice. This line of inquiry, initiated by Freud¹ himself over twenty years ago, has been carried forward by Servadio,² Eisenbud,³ Ehrenwald,⁴ Pederson-Krag,⁵ and others.

¹ *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-analysis*, 1933.

² "Psychoanalyse und Telepathie," *Imago*, Vol. 21, 1935, pp. 489-97.

³ "Telepathy and Problems of Psychoanalysis," *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, Vol. 15, 1946, pp. 74-9: "The Dreams of Two Patients in Analysis interpreted as a Telepathic *Rêve à Deux*," *ibid.*, Vol. 16, 1947, pp. 39-60, and "Analysis of a Presumptively Telepathic Dream," *The Psychiatric Quarterly*, Vol. 22, 1948, pp. 103-35.

⁴ "Telepathy in Dreams," *British Journal for Medical Psychology*, Vol. 19, 1942, pp. 313-23, and "Telepathy in the Psychoanalytic Situation," *ibid.*, Vol. 20, 1944, pp. 51-62.

⁵ "Telepathy and Repression," *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, Vol. 16, 1947, pp. 61-8.

More light on the unconscious may also be expected from the use of the projective methods of personality diagnosis, not only by the group method mentioned earlier, but by intensive analysis of individual predispositions. Not only the Rorschach but many other methods such as free drawing and painting, and graphological techniques, promise a good deal for the next few years, in relation to the tangled skein of unconscious intercommunication between the various aspects of psychic structure. All of this is ultimately directed by the belief that if once the complex blockages at an unconscious level may be removed, one may move toward understanding and control of the paranormal.

IV

This is, of course, a long-range goal, a matter of many years. But even when all of this has been accomplished and stands in full stature before us, I must confess that I believe that beyond both needs and barriers there is a *tertium quid*. There is, I suspect, some supplementary principle, or indeed, some over-arching all-encompassing principle. To introduce my *tertium quid*, I will tell you the odd story of Lillian Levine.

Lillian Levine was one of a group of Hunter College women who came to our laboratory in a group experiment under the direction of Mrs Dale.¹ Miss Levine sat in an experimental room operating a signal set which required her only to depress one or another of five keys, to indicate which of five cards she guessed to be the target in a randomly prepared series. In another room sat Dr Ernest Taves, who witnessed the experiment, and Mrs Dale, the experimenter, with a deck of ESP cards, from which one card at a time was removed and exposed as a target. Well, as Miss Levine began a run, she got 15 consecutive calls correct. Since these cards were set up by random numbers, and the odds of one in five remain constant throughout the operation, it is about a one in thirty-thousand million shot to succeed in 15 consecutive calls.

Hot on the trail of this bizarre phenomenon, we attempted to get some sort of clue as to what Miss Levine had done. The most that we could find out was that she had looked at the radiator in the room in which she sat, and had seemed to see the various symbols, like crosses and waves, in the rhythmic protuberances and recesses on the side of the radiator. So far she was like the man who saw his friend's "death mask". She had not, however, been in any marked trance or abstracted state. In fact, when she saw these images in the radiator, it did not really mean the kind of seeing that one has with a crystal vision, but rather the kind of half-seeing, half-imagining which occurs in responding to a cloud or a Rorschach test. We proceeded, of course, to give Miss Levine a Rorschach test, and we wearied her a good deal, I think, with attempts to probe into what happened. But we got nowhere. We did not find out anything so very unique about Miss Levine's needs or intrapsychic barriers. Even if we had done so, we should still be unable to explain how she fell into the successful groove and how she fell out again. We are not in a mood to say that such an amazing performance is "just one of those things". Rather, we are inclined to say that psychical research is full of cases of our

¹ "A Further Report on the Midas Touch," *Journal A.S.P.R.*, Vol. 37, 1943, pp. 111-18.

tertium quid, cases in which the maximum you can do with the theory of needs and with the theory of barriers still leaves you with something big upon which you still cannot get your fingers. For the point is that something new and different happened suddenly to her—perhaps a deep-level contact with Mrs Dale, perhaps a basically different way of orienting herself to her task. But what happened was not a gradual drifting away and back; it was a clean break with her usual procedure.

I have wondered whether the Shakespeare plays have not attempted to tell us the same thing. Notice, for example, the playwright's handling of Banquo's ghost. The phantasm appears suddenly, sharply—cleanly, one might say. Macbeth does not toy with the question whether he is suffering from a hallucination of the "heat-oppressed brain"; he screams: "Thou canst not say I did it." When the apparition disappears, Macbeth instantly recovers, exclaiming, "Why, now, being gone, I am a man again!" The playwright, as if to reinforce his intention, has actually given us stage directions: twice the Ghost enters, and twice "exit Ghost". One is not dealing in such instances with the normal waxing and waning of human needs or of human barriers relative to such needs; one is not simply reaching out and making some sort of contact with the vast world outside; rather, something is *invading* the individual, invading almost in the sense which Myers used in *Phantasms of the Living*. The process of psi-gamma, as Professor Thouless and Dr Wiesner¹ name it, is action not only *by* the individual, but *upon* the individual.

The exploration of the *tertium quid* seems to lead to a result largely foreseen by Myers and Mrs Sidgwick. This result, I believe, has the regular characteristics of a new scientific idea in the sense that such ideas are likely at first flush to be quite shocking; then after a moment's catching of the breath, they are likely to appear utterly banal, obvious, not worth the point of making, and then third, as one thinks over the two earlier phases of one's thought, one begins to say, "Well, this is after all a different way of looking at things; let us set up experiments to see whether one can predict the outcome more accurately from the new formulation than one can from the old."

So, for whatever my suggestion may be worth, I will suggest that the third clue to the paranormal lies beyond the realm of needs and barriers, indeed that it does not lie inside of human personality at all, whether in its generic or in its individualized aspects. I believe, on the contrary, that it is strictly interpersonal; that it lies in the relations between persons and not *in* the persons as such. If it be objected immediately that it must be personal if it is to be interpersonal, then let me plead that there is all the difference in the world between our stretching the conception of the personal to the breaking-point and on the other hand, our burning all our individualistic bridges behind us, and saying that the world of interpersonal phenomena is a world which must be faced on its own terms; pursued in its own right; its laws made clear and recognized to be essentially different from those laws which apply to individuals. I would plead for the direct empirical study of the laws of the interpersonal; the functions of an interpersonal field. I suggest that it is not within the individual

¹ "The Psi Processes in Normal and 'Paranormal' Psychology," *Proc. S.P.R.*, Vol. 48, 1947, pp. 177-96.

psychic structures, but within certain specific relations between the psychic structure of one individual and the psychic structure of another that our clue lies; or if you like, that the phenomena are, so to speak, trans-personal, just as they are, indeed, trans-spatial and trans-temporal.

In this audience are investigators who have done much to confirm this view, however little they may think of the theoretical interpretations I would put upon their work. For did not Soal and Goldney¹ tell us that the telepathic gifts of B.S. were not liberated by all situations, nor by all agents, but only under certain conditions, with certain people serving successfully as agents and others utterly unsuccessful in the attempt? Did they not clearly demonstrate that the powers were not the powers of B.S., but the powers, so to speak, of certain couples—or, indeed, powers expressed by certain field situations in which experimenters, agents and percipients were all essential dynamic constituents?

Has not Dr Soal told us in his Myers Memorial Lecture² about the extraordinary phenomenon of divided agency? Mrs Stewart can receive telepathically from two agents, neither of whom actually knows the picture to be transmitted. One of them knows the spot where the target picture lies, but not what picture it is, and the other knows what pictures lie at 5 given spots, but not which spot will be selected as the target location. Here is a field function with a vengeance! This is indeed reminiscent of the hypothesis offered by Mrs Sidgwick,³ according to which a sitter's mind acts in such a way as to establish a relation between the medium and a distant living person, so that the interaction of at least three personalities is involved.

This would mean that systematic, sensitive, resourceful investigations of the personalities of experimenters as well as of subjects, need to be taken, and of the interrelations of personality. I would like to quote here an observation of Schmeidler's⁴ made on the basis of one of her studies of group atmospheres as they relate to clairvoyance tests:

"I should like to generalize from the results in some such way as this: in a group which considered the atmosphere of the experiment to be unpleasantly cold and intellectual, only the subjects who were themselves rather cold and intellectual responded positively and made good scores. In the other experiments a different atmosphere was established, and a different personality pattern in the subjects led to successful responses.

"If this generalization is correct, what are its implications? One conclusion would be that my research does not show the personality correlates of ESP ability as such, but only of ESP ability under the particular conditions of the experiment. Whenever the situation varies widely from these conditions, we can expect the optimum personality pattern to vary also."

¹ See footnote 3, p. 8.

² "The Experimental Situation in Psychical Research," being the Ninth *Frederic W. H. Myers Memorial Lecture*, Society for Psychical Research, 1947.

³ "Discussion of the Trance Phenomena of Mrs Piper," *Proc. S.P.R.*, Vol. 15, 1900-1901, pp. 16-38.

⁴ "Personality Correlates of ESP as Shown by Rorschach Studies," *Journal of Parapsychology*, Vol. 13, 1949, p. 30.

If for no other reason than to stimulate discussion, I would go on to urge that if some one other than Dr Soal, let us say Dr Q., had been systematically scouring this country for gifted ESP subjects, using an equally objective and severe method, he might have found that B.S. was a poor subject, and that someone else, let us say, X.Y.Z., gave consistent, positive results. Indeed, what *did* happen when B.S. was tested by a prearranged telepathy method to see if he could get an agent's thought at the time? He failed; and it was only later discovered that he had his own way of functioning in this situation, namely, with reference to the future and the past. What about the people whose way of functioning we have not yet happened to discover? Are they gifted or non-gifted, or is the answer relative to the method? Again, forgive me when I say I am confused when I hear people tell us that we should spend all our time looking for good subjects. Can we really be sure that there are any good subjects in an absolute sense? Individual endowment, like that of B.S. and Mrs Stewart, is of the utmost importance; but the endowment appears in relation to a particular task, method, and personal setting. It is true, and very important, that B.S. and Mrs Stewart scored with several agents. It is true that Mrs Piper and Mrs Leonard have exhibited brilliant powers with many sitters. If what I am urging is sound, there should be found in certain gifted individuals a great many "open lines" of interpsychic communication, so to speak; but these are still dependent on a larger context.

Interpersonal factors released by the experimenters are certainly major factors in such contexts.

One of the outstanding things about the Duke University research, I think, has been the inculcation of certain attributes in certain experimenters which make it possible for them to set free something with certain individual subjects. This does not mean that they can always set it free, nor that what they obtain from one subject is the same as what they obtain from another. But my mind goes back to the year 1934, in which I first visited Rhine at Duke University, and saw the rugged force of the demands which he made upon his co-workers and subjects. In the light of his glowing intensity, it became possible to begin to understand the accounts given in his book of the way in which he had driven some of his subjects in the demand to get extra-sensory phenomena. It may well have been this intensity which produced the results—including some of the best-authenticated long distance results which we have in all this field. In the case of Schmeidler's studies in clairvoyance I believe the results may well have arisen from a very different kind of intensity, namely her sheer unwillingness to let people fail. And it was, I am convinced, the intensity of Mrs Dale's¹ devotion to her first independent PK experiment, of which she was so proud, and in which so much ego was invested, from which her brilliant positive results emerged. Whately Carington's methods were successful time and again with groups that he organized, and which caught his spirit; but no such comparable results have been easily obtainable away from the white heat of his own brilliant personality. There must, of course, be the fullest possible control whether the intensity level is high or low.

I doubt whether we can go on with the tradition that an experimenter—

¹ "The Psychokinetic Effect: The First A.S.P.R. Experiment," *Journal A.S.P.R.*, Vol. 40, 1946, pp. 123-51.

any experimenter—undertakes to test a subject—any subject—with a standard method—any standard method—for ESP or PK. If an experimenter in the abstract tests a subject in the abstract with a method in the abstract, experience shows that we can be pretty certain that we shall have nothing to show for our pains. I am much gratified to note in the most recent number of the *S.P.R. Journal* that Dr West has ably stated the case for individualizing the method of testing.

But I am really asking you to consider a rather simple, naive, and disturbing hypothesis, a conception which points not to the solitary grandeur and rugged independence of personality, as we like to conceive it, but to personality as a node or region of relative concentration in a field of vast and complex interpenetrating forces, in which none of us is completely individualized any more than he is completely washed out in a cosmic sink of impersonality. Our roots lie between the personal and the impersonal, between the I and the It, between the local and the universal, between the present and the timeless. Here, one comes close to some classical conceptions both of India and of our Western tradition, which suggest the relativity of our independence and separateness from one another, and indicate that the anchorage of our personal natures in the circumstances of the moment and of the place may perhaps be considerably less absolute than is supposed. Just as the field theory of Clerk-Maxwell has taught us to think of the distribution of energy in a time-space rather than in terms of little chunks of matter, so in psychology one may find it feasible to think in terms of the field relations that develop to encompass and express a group of persons.

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Along these lines, we find a rich opportunity for closer cooperation with psychology, especially social and clinical psychology, so deeply concerned as they are with interpersonal relations. Much more can be done as clinical methods and methods of research on social groups progress. This is why I am in such full agreement with Professor Thouless as to the need for an organic unity of psychology and psychical research, in which each will throw light upon the other.

The moral effect of psychical research in breaking down classical dogmatism regarding the limitations of the human personality to the world of its senses, is beginning to be glimpsed here and there. And the methods by which unconscious motivation, blockages to communication, interpersonal dynamic effects can be explored in relation to the paranormal will help us to understand psychological and interpersonal dynamics as they appear in daily life. At the same time, we in psychical research owe a great debt to experimental and clinical psychology. It has over and over again given us new techniques for the study of motivation, of dissociation, of unconscious blocking and unblocking. It has given us projective tests, devices for studying atmospheres and interpersonal effects. Just as psychology cannot get along without psychical research, so psychical research cannot get along without psychology. It is even possible that, as Schmeidler and Pratt and Humphrey have suggested, the same general laws which hold in all psychology, laws relating to the structuring of the world of perception, relating to the influence of motivation upon such structuring, relating to the Gestalt principles of membership character,

closure, salience, relating to the satiation of motives and the role of substitutes during such satiation, and indeed all the general psychological laws may be found to apply perfectly to paranormal perception. At the same time, certain laws emerging first in paranormal perception, such as the ability of subjects consistently to miss targets to a significant degree, later emerge in normal perception.

It is possible, in short, that the two worlds are one except for some single principle which, so to speak, throws on a particular switch. If this should prove to be the case, our attention might ultimately be directed to the nature of this switch. It is also possible that the three clues suggested, namely, unconscious motivation, dissociation, and interpersonal organization or field relationships may prove to be all that is needed. It is quite possible that if we can state the interpersonal structure of a situation so fully that its motivational dynamics and its intrapsychic and interpsychic barriers can be fully defined, we shall be able to state when and where a particular paranormal process will appear. At any rate, I would suggest the experiment of looking upon personality as the same subject matter whether it happens to be studied by psychologists or by psychical researchers; that we regard the paranormal as emerging from lawful and ultimately intelligible factors operative within normal personalities; that we regard psychical research and general psychology as interpenetrating and at times fusing, and always sharing outlooks and methods; and finally, since all psychological phenomena are to some degree individualized, that we make the most of all of those methods by which individuality may be studied with a view of trying to understand individual paranormal gifts; remembering that the individual with his marked gifts is never utterly sundered from the less gifted about him, and that his special gift is in some degree a function of that interpersonal existence which all human personality expresses.

If this is sound, there is equal need in the coming years for two types of research: first, a need to continue the exceedingly important studies of those individuals who are highly gifted in specific ways, such as clairvoyance or precognition, finding *why* it is that they fluctuate in the presence of different persons and under different conditions, and setting up testable hypotheses regarding interpersonal dynamics. Secondly, there is a need for mass researches along lines in which the group atmosphere or social climates can be fully specified and empirically tested. When one gets a group effect, one would at once attempt to define what is operating; one would develop such clinical methods as have already been used by Humphrey, Schmeidler, and others, and apply them mercilessly to all participants, including oneself.

So, as my time draws to a close, you find me pleading for more study of those deep resources of human personality of which Frederic Myers first made us fully aware, working in close contact with psychology, psychiatry, and the social sciences; more explicit recognition that psychical research has a huge contribution to make to an understanding of human nature; and indeed a willingness to consider the possibility, even in times as troubled as our own, that we may do our own part to help find a sound basis upon which to predicate the oneness of the human family; its fulfilment, through deeper interpersonal ties, of its place in its cosmos.